Kohli hits 93 as India edge New Zealand in ODI opener

VADODARA: Virat Kohli hit 93 to help India chase down 301 in a tense four-wicket win over New Zealand in the first one-day international on Sunday.

The in-form Kohli struck his 77th ODI half-century as he became the second leading run-scorer in international cricket with a total of 28,068 runs.

With his dismissal, India slipped from 234-2 to 242-5 before they reached their target with six balls to spare in Vadodara.

Skipper Shubman Gill made 56 in a 118-run second wicket stand with Kohli, who shared another strong partnership with Shreyas Iyer, who made 49.

Late cameos by Harshit Rana (29) and wicket-keeper-batter KL Rahul, who made an unbeaten 29 including the winning six, secured an Indian lead in the three-match series 1-0.

New Zealand pace spearhead Kyle Jamieson stood out with figures of 4-41.

Kohli led the chase as he went past Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara (28,016 runs) to move second in the list of leading run-scorers in the international game, behind fellow Indian Sachin Tendulkar (34,357).

"My journey has been nothing short of a dream-come-true for me," Kohli said after being named man of the match.

"I look at my journey with grace and gratitude. With the way I am playing at the moment, I am not looking at milestones. Only thing in my mind was to help the team win." The 37-year-old Kohli only plays the ODI format after he and fellow stalwart Rohit Sharma, 38, retired from T20 and Test cricket.

Rohit started strongly in his brisk 26 before he fell to New Zealand's Jamieson.

INDIAN batter Virat Kohli plays a shot during the first One-day International against New Zealand at the Kotambi Stadium on Sunday.—AFP

The packed crowd welcomed Kohli with a huge roar as the star batter joined Gill at the crease to take the attack to the opposition.

He was ably supported by Gill, who has returned from an injury and a snub by the selectors from the T20 World Cup squad.

Gill started slowly before he gained pace to raise his 16th ODI fifty but soon fell to rookie leg-spinner Adithya Ashok.

Kohli was denied a ton by Jamieson, who got the batter caught out at mid-off. The former captain walked back to a standing ovation.

Jamieson dismissed Ravindra Jadeja, for four, in the same over and in the next bowled Iyer to raise New Zealand's hopes of a turnaround.

India's troubles increased with injury to Washington Sundar, who suffered a side strain while bowling his off-spin and came out to bat at number eight.

India were helped by a couple of dropped catches by an otherwise brilliant New Zealand fielding team.

Rana survived a reprieve on 12 by Daryl Mitchell.

"We can be proud of our effort," said skipper Michael Bracewell.

"Taking the number one team in the world to the last over was a pretty good effort. If we could have got 320-330 then it would have been the difference.

"We talk about match-changing moments in the field, if we had taken those then it would have been different," Bracewell said.

Earlier, New Zealand posted 300-8 after Mitchell hit 84 to defy the Indian bowlers following the hosts' decision to field first.

Openers Devon Conway, who made 56, and Henry Nicholls (62) put on 117 but New Zealand suffered from a lack of major partnerships after their big opening stand. Pace bowlers Mohammed Siraj, Rana and Prasidh Krishna took two wickets each.

The second match is on Wednesday in Rajkot.—AFP

Scoreboard

NEW ZEALAND:
D. Conway b Rana 56
H. Nicholls c Rahul b Rana 62
W. Young c Rahul b Siraj 12
D. Mitchell lbw Krishna 84
G. Phillips c Iyer b Yadav 12
M. Hay b Krishna 18
M. Bracewell run out 16
Z. Foulkes b Siraj 1
K. Clarke not out 24
K. Jamieson not out 8
EXTRAS (W-7) 7
TOTAL (for eight wkts, 50 overs) ... 300
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-117 (Nicholls), 2-126 (Conway), 3-146 (Young), 4-170 (Phillips), 5-198 (Hay), 6-237 (Bracewell), 7-239 (Foulkes), 8-281 (Mitchell)
DID NOT BAT: A. Ashok
BOWLING: Siraj 8-0-40-2 (1w), Rana 10-0-65-2 (4w), Sundar 5-0-27-0, Krishna 9-0-60-2, Yadav 9-0-52-1 (1w), Jadeja 9-0-56-0 (1w)
INDIA:
R. Sharma c Bracewell b Jamieson ... 26
S. Gill c Phillips b Ashok 56
V. Kohli c Bracewell b Jamieson 93
S. Iyer b Jamieson 49
R. Jadeja c Clarke b Jamieson 4
K. L Rahul not out 29
H. Rana c Hay b Clarke 29
W. Sundar not out 7
EXTRAS (LB-4, W-9) 13
TOTAL (for six wkts, 49 overs) 306
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-39 (Sharma), 2-157 (Gill), 3-234 (Kohli), 4-239 (Jadeja), 5-242 (Iyer), 6-279 (Rana)
DID NOT BAT: K. Yadav, M. Siraj, P. Krishna
BOWLING: Jamieson 10-1-41-4 (4w), Foulkes 10-0-49-0, Ashok 6-0-55-1, Clarke 10-0-73-1, Bracewell 8-0-56-0 (3w), Phillips 4-0-21-0, Mitchell 1-0-7-0 (1w)
RESULT: India won by four wickets.
PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH: Virat Kohli

DAMBULLA: Sri Lankan batter Dhananjaya de Silva plays a shot during the third Twenty20 International against Pakistan at the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium on Sunday.—AFP

Sri Lanka seal gritty T20 win over Pakistan to level series

DAMBULLA: Sri Lanka eked out a hard fought 14-run victory over Pakistan in the third T20 at rain-hit Dambulla on Sunday, easing their batting jitters and squaring the three-match series 1-1.

The series, a warm-up for the T20 World Cup with Pakistan set to play all their matches in Sri Lanka due to political tensions with nuclear-armed neighbours India, saw the visitors clinch the opener by six wickets before rain washed out the second game.

"We were a bit worried about our batting and I'm glad we addressed that today," said Wanindu Hasaranga, who walked away with both Player of the Match and Player of the Series honours.

"The bowlers did a good job too. The ball was wet and it wasn't easy. We tried to bowl wide and slow and asked them to take risks." Hasaranga took four wickets in the game and in the process completed 150 wickets in T20Is.

Scoreboard

SRI LANKA:
P. Nissanka c Faheem b Naseem 0
K. Mishara c Nafay b Wasim 20
K. Mendis c Usman b Wasim 30
D. de Silva c Sahibzada b Nawaz 22
C. Asalanka c Nawaz b Faheem 21
D. Shanaka c Saim b Wasim 34
J. Liyanage not out 22
W. Hasaranga not out 1
EXTRAS (B-1, LB-2, W-7) 10
TOTAL (for six wickets, 12 overs) 160
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-10 (Nissanka), 2-22 (Mishara), 3-54 (de Silva), 4-100 (Mendis), 5-102 (Asalanka), 6-154 (Shanaka)
DID NOT BAT: M. Theekshana, E. Malinga, M. Pathirana
BOWLING: Naseem 3-0-35-1 (3w), Wasim 3-0-54-3 (2w), Abrar 2-0-22-0 (1w), Shadab 2-0-19-0, Nawaz 1-0-8-1, Faheem 1-0-19-1
PAKISTAN: Sahibzada Farhan b Malinga .. 9
Saim Ayub c Malinga b Hasaranga 6
Salman Ali Agha c Malinga b Pathirana 45
Usman Khan c Nissanka b Hasaranga 1
Mohammad Nawaz b Pathirana 28
Khawaja Nafay c de Silva b Hasaranga 26
Shadab Khan c Malinga b Hasaranga 6
Faheem Ashraf run out (Mendis) 9
Mohammad Wasim not out 7
Naseem Shah not out 1
EXTRAS (LB-1, W-7) 8
TOTAL (for eight wickets, 12 overs) 146
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-9 (Sahibzada), 2-60 (Salman), 3-62 (Saim), 4-67 (Usman), 5-116 (Nafay), 6-123 (Shadab), 7-133 (Nawaz), 8-141 (Faheem)
DID NOT BAT: Abrar Ahmed
BOWLING: Theekshana 2-0-27-0, Malinga 2-0-27-1 (5w), Pathirana 3-0-34-2 (1w), Hasaranga 3-0-35-4 (1w), de Silva 2-0-22-0
RESULT: Sri Lanka win by 14 runs Sri Lanka.

In a contest trimmed to 12 overs a side, Sri Lanka muscled their way to a competitive 160 before choking Pakistan to 146-8.

Having been bowled out inside 20 overs in the series opener, Sri Lanka needed a statement with the bat and duly ticked every box after being put in.

The top order laid the platform and the middle order applied the finishing touches.

Wicket-keeper Kusal Mendis made hay under the Power Play, blasting 30 off 16 balls while Dhananjaya de Silva (22 off 15) and Charith Asalanka (21 off 13) kept the scoreboard ticking.

Skipper Dasun Shanaka then swung the momentum decisively, clubbing 34 off just nine deliveries, peppered with five towering sixes.

The sixth-wicket stand between Shanaka and Janith Liyanage produced 52 runs in just 15 balls and proved the turning point, shifting the game firmly Sri Lanka's way.

Pakistan came out swinging in reply, racing to 50 in just 19 balls with captain Salman Ali Agha hammering 45 off 12 balls, including five fours and three sixes.

But once the field spread, Sri Lanka tightened the screws, applied the choke and forced the asking rate to spiral.

"It was a good game of cricket," Salman said. "We conceded too many runs, but our batting effort was good. Unfortunately, we fell short. We know we are going to play all our World Cup games in Sri Lanka and it's important that we played in similar conditions," he added.—AFP

Ekstrom takes Dakar stage seven victory, Al-Attiyah stays top

RIYADH: Mattias Ekstrom won stage seven of the Dakar Rally on Sunday as the field started the second week in Saudi Arabia with late drama for Toyota's Henk Lategan while Qatar's Nasser Al-Attiyah stayed top in the car category.

South African Lategan had looked like taking the stage and overall lead but let both slip through his fingers after the day's final checkpoint.

Instead Sweden's Ekstrom, winner of the prologue in a Ford Raptor, became the first driver in the top car category to take more than one stage this year.

Lategan had led Ekstrom after 417 of 459km from Riyadh to Wadi Ad Dawasir but finished eight minutes and 35 seconds behind the winner after having to stop for 10 minutes at the 428km mark.

Ekstrom moved up to second overall, four minutes and 47 seconds behind Dacia Sandriders' five-times Dakar winner Al-Attiyah with Lategan third.

Spaniard Nani Roma was fourth for Ford after being reinstated by stewards late on Saturday's rest day as winner of stage five and having a one minute and 10 second penalty rescinded.

In the motorcycle category, Australian Daniel Sanders extended his lead over American rival Ricky Brabec to four minutes and 25 seconds with Argentine rider Luciano Benavides a further 15 seconds adrift.

Sanders had been a mere 45 seconds clear after Friday's sixth stage but Honda's Brabec finished the 459km stage 10th to the Australian's fourth.

Argentine Benavides won the stage, his second triumph of the event, in a one-two for the Red Bull KTM factory team with Spaniard Edgar Canet, while Honda's French challenger Adrien Van Beveren was third.

Monday's 481km stage eight is the longest of the race with riders and drivers navigating canyons and dunes around Wadi Ad Dawasir.—Reuters

Zakaria, Orfi claim Karachi Open titles in Egyptian double

KARACHI: Egypt's Mohamad Zakaria claimed the biggest title of his career after a monumental 100-minute battle, while compatriot Amina Orfi secured her fourth trophy of the season, as the Karachi Open concluded with thrilling finals at the DA Creek Club on Sunday.

In the men's final, the world no 11 Zakaria twice came from behind to defeat fellow Egyptian and sixth seed Aly Abou Eleinen 9-11, 11-9, 12-14, 11-7, 11-7 in a brutal, see-sawing contest.

The men's final was an epic that saw Zakaria lift the biggest title of his career after twice coming from behind to defeat fellow Egyptian Aly Abou Eleinen.

The clash between the fifth and sixth seeds was a brutal affair from the outset, with both players extending rallies in a war of attrition.

It was Eleinen who initially seized control, using smart attacks to take time away from Zakaria and edging a crucial first game after 23 minutes.

Eleinen's relentless pace continued into the second, where he surged to a 7-3 lead, but Zakaria began to find his lines, fought back to draw level and eventually levelled the match after 43 minutes of play.

The third game was a 27-minute masterpiece of the highest level, the pair trading blows into a lengthy tie-break.

Eleinen's unwavering determination to attack ultimately outweighed Zakaria's impressive retrievals, with the older Egyptian reeling off three brilliant winners to move 2-1 ahead.

He then carried that momentum into the fourth, racing to a 6-2 lead. Yet, demonstrating remarkable grit, Zakaria once again clawed his way back, drawing level at 6-6 and taking the game 11-7 to force a decider after 87 minutes.

The fifth game saw a critical moment when Eleinen pulled up with cramp at 3-1 down. Zakaria, however, failed to immediately capitalise, hitting three errors to let Eleinen close to 8-7.

But the 18-year-old held his nerve, regained his composure, and sealed a monumental victory.

"I've definitely worked on the physical side of my game, I was really happy that I wasn't that tired going into the fifth game against Aly today. It paid off," said Zakaria.

Zakaria also reflected on their long rivalry after the match.

"I grew up playing with Aly in Alexandria from a young age, so that match before anything was a proud moment for both of us to be in a major final together. It is something that I will remember for the rest of my life," added Zakaria, the two-time World Junior Champion.

The women's final provided a stark contrast in style, as world no three and top seed Orfi delivered a commanding, straight-games victory over Malaysia's world no seven Sivasangari Subramaniam 11-8, 11-2, 11-7 in just 38 minutes.

The four-time World Junior Champion was in near-faultless form, racing to a 4-0 lead in the first game and never relinquishing control.

Her dominance peaked in the second game, where she won eleven consecutive points to seal it 11-2.

Orfi's precision, particularly her line-hitting down the backhand wing, proved too much for her opponent.

EGYPT'S Mohamad Zakariya (L) and compatriot Amina Orfi pose with their respective winner's trophies after the Karachi Open finals at the DA Creek Club on Sunday.—Tahir Jamal/White Star

"I'm so happy to get through the match in three games today," Orfi said. "The past few days, I wasn't really playing my best, but today I think I played my best. I played the squash I've been training for during the short off-season break."

The win marks her fourth PSA Tour title of the 2025/26 season.

"Winning another [Gold title] to start the new year will give me a push going into busy months in January and February with two Platinum events in the US. Hopefully, I can win those as well," she stated.—Sports Reporter

United knocked out of FA Cup by Brighton, Martinelli hits hat-trick

PORTSMOUTH: Manchester United crashed out of the FA Cup with a meek 2-1 home defeat to Brighton on Sunday as Gabriel Martinelli's hat-trick fired Arsenal to a 4-1 win at Portsmouth to reach round four.

United interim boss Darren Fletcher could only watch on in horror as the Red Devils' last chance of silverware this season and likely his chances of landing the job until the end of the season went up in smoke at Old Trafford.

Fletcher's men were left to rue not making more of a positive start before Brajan Gruda fired the visitors in front on 12 minutes from Danny Welbeck's cross.

The roles were reversed midway through the second half as Welbeck lashed into the top corner against his former club.

There were persistent chants targeting United co-owners the Glazer family and British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe as the discontent at Old Trafford grew.

PORTSMOUTH: Arsenal's Gabriel Martinelli heads to score during the FA Cup third-round match against Portsmouth at Fratton Park on Sunday.—Reuters

And any hope those in charge of the club had for a bounce following the removal of Ruben Amorim has proved very short-lived.

Benjamin Sesko's late header set up a grandstand finish, but it proved too little, too late for Fletcher.

A red card for teenager Shea Lacey in stoppage time for dissent rounded off United's miserable afternoon.

Earlier, Martinelli shrugged off the backlash to his clash with stricken Liverpool defender Conor Bradley as Arsenal reached the fourth round for the first time in three years.

Championship side Portsmouth were dreaming of an upset against the Premier League leaders when they went in front after just three minutes through Colby Bishop.

Mikel Arteta had made 10 changes from the side that drew 0-0 with Liverpool on Thursday.

Martinelli drew stinging criticism for trying to push Bradley off the pitch in the closing stages after the Northern Irishman hit the ground with a serious knee injury.

Liverpool confirmed on Sunday the right-back will need surgery and will miss the rest of the season.

The Brazilian apologised to Bradley after the game and did not seem affected by the furore at Fratton Park.

"That's personality, come in and talk on the pitch," said Arteta.

"To play for a big club you need a big personality because it can be that [being at the centre of a controversial incident], it can be an action that you miss, it can be something that costs you a game, and three days later there is a game, so you need to lift yourself up and make it count."

Meanwhile, West Ham United eased the mounting pressure on Nuno Espirito Santo as new signing Taty Castellanos scored his first goal for the club to beat Queen Park Rangers 2-1 after extra-time.

Castellanos has been signed to dig them out of trouble at the bottom of the Premier League and the 26 million ($35 million) arrival from Lazio bulleted home a header from Crysencio Summerville's cross to secure a much-needed win.

Elsewhere, Leeds United needed a second-half fightback to beat Derby County 3-1 and book their place in the fourth round.

League One Mansfield held off Sheffield United to book their place in round four with a 4-3 win at Bramall Lane. Norwich, Hull and West Brom also progressed to the last 32.

In Saturday's late match, Aston Villa heaped more pressure on Tottenham Hotspur manager Thomas Frank as the Birmingham club won 2-1 .

Emiliano Buendia and Morgan Rogers put Villa in control but Tottenham rallied after a Wilson Odobert goal to set up an absorbing finale.

Meanwhile, Liam Rosenior's reign as Chelsea manager began with a 5-1 win at second-tier Charlton Athletic.

A trip to London rivals Charlton looked like a tricky first assignment for Rosenior, who replaced Enzo Maresca this week, but his side cruised with goals by Jorrel Hato, Tosin Adarabioyo, Marc Guiu, Pedro Neto and Enzo Fernandez.—Agencies